

## **The Morrell Estate Wills**

David Watts recently gave a fascinating talk on the 1940 sale of the entire Morrell estate in Streatley. Circumstances that led to the auction two weeks after the Dunkirk evacuation were so unusual and raised so many unanswered questions that further research on the history and the circumstances that brought about the sale at such a difficult time was requested. The Streatley property was part of a much larger estate based around the Lion Brewery in Oxford (which closed down in 1998). It proved trickier than expected to find records relating to Streatley and so a study of the wills of key people in the story - James Morrell, Emily Stone, Emily Alicia Morrell and George Mark Morrell - was undertaken as a starting point. This has provided a great deal of new information and salient points from the probate documents form the basis of this article.

James Morrell was in 'trade', the owner of the largest brewery in Oxford with over 150 public houses. However he aspired to be recognised as a gentleman, conscious that the wider Morrell family were 'county', the male members being ministers of the Church of England, barristers and solicitors or simply engaged in the gentlemanly country pursuits of hunting, shooting and fishing. He bought Headington Hill Hall in Oxford and surrounding farmlands proudly calling the house 'his mansion'.

The 77 years from his death in 1863 to the forced sale in 1940 of Streatley House, plus other properties, farmlands and enclosures in Streatley, Moulsoford and Goring, saw the rise and fall of one of the greatest estates in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

James Morrell had only one daughter, Emily Alicia, and his will and those of his sister/her aunt Emily Stone (nee Morrell), Emily Alicia herself and her younger son George Mark Morrell chart a complex weave of financial trusts and settlements. These were put in place primarily to protect Emily Alicia from the attentions of 'fortune hunters' as a young girl, and to ensure the safeguarding of the family interests in the future.

When James died in 1863 he left an estate worth £100,000, a very large sum at that time. His wealth came from the profits of his brewery and rentals from his freehold, leasehold and copyhold lands. In this year Emily Alicia was only nine and so in his will he had directed that a series of trusts and settlements be set up to be managed by three trustees. They were given his full authority to take whatever action was deemed necessary to protect and enhance the business and estates prior to his daughter attaining the age of 21. She was to be a very rich heiress.

His foresight was well justified: when she was 14 rumours started to circulate that George Herbert Morrell (1845-1906), her third cousin, was showing undue interest in her. The family was horrified and when this interest continued the trustees made her a ward of court. However the couple's friendship blossomed and they became engaged when she was 19. In 1874 they were married.

### **James Morrell (1810-1863) of Headington Hill Hall, Oxford**

*Probate granted 16 November 1863 to Frederick Joseph Morrell, John Richard Sneyd Ramsbottom, Thomas Sherwood, Thomas Hedges Graham, Rev Charles Dundas Everett and Edward Law Hussey, the executors.*

I bequeath Alicia Harriet Morrell [his wife] an annuity of £3000 payable on my death, a legacy of £2000, my carriages and carriage horses. To Mrs Morrell's School £150 to meet the cost of a school mistress and clothing for the girls.

I give my Mansion House at Headington Hall, its park, pleasure grounds, lands, garden lodge, buildings and premises and the houses, stables, fruit garden, freehold grass fields on the north side of the park, freehold grass fields adjoining St Clement's Church and the college field and buildings held under Magdalen College to my wife Alicia Harriet she to hold them in trust for my only daughter Emily Alicia Morrell when she attains 21.

The Mansion House and all its contents to be kept in good repair and insured to their full value. My trustees to reimburse themselves of all their expenses from the Annuity provided for my wife. My trustees -Frederick Joseph Morrell, John Richard Ramsbottom and Thomas Sherwood are to administer my freehold, leasehold and copyhold estates. They will be responsible for the residual personal estate all of which is held in trust for my daughter Emily Alicia Morrell, her children and heirs. The trustees to have freedom to act in all financial matters as they think fit, investing the revenue from rents in Public Stocks or Funds of Great Britain in England and Wales.

The will also included instructions for the appointment of new trustees and their successors. There were six codicils.

*Codicil 1:* I give certain powers over my real and personal estates to Frederick Joseph Morrell, John Richard Ramsbottom and Thomas Sherwood for certain trusts. They together with my wife will act as guardians for my daughter. I also wish to add Herbert Parsons and Thomas Hedges as Trustees and executors of my will.

I request my Trustees and Executors to employ the bank of Messrs Parson Thomson & Co of Oxford as bankers in all matters relating to the trusts in my will whereas I am indebted to Thomas Hedges Graham for monies lent to me and secured by the deposition of my Culham Estate deeds by way of an Equitable Mortgage and that accumulated funds from the residues or surpluses of the rents and profits of my freehold, leasehold and copyhold hereditaments, after meeting repairs and maintenance and the education of my daughter may be charged on my Culham Estate.

*Codicil 2:* I give to my wife my pack of greyhounds. If she does not wish them they are to go to my servant John Turner.

*Codicil 3:* I appoint additional executors Charles Dundas Everett and Edward Law Hussey.

*Codicil 4:* [Further bequests to] 'my cousin John Dalzell of Wallingford'.

*Codicil 5:* [Further bequest to] 'William Everett – my brother-in-law'

*Codicil 6:* I authorise my executors and trustees to pay certain gratuities and pensions to old servants of my family, at their discretion provided no individual award exceeds £250.

### **Emily Stone (1811-1891)**

Emily Morrell, the sister of James, married her cousin William Stone, a London barrister who owned a great number of properties and land in Streatley and Moulsoford including Streatley House, together with Wick Farm, Headington. Emily Stone brought up her niece Emily Alicia at Streatley from the age of 10 as Alicia Morrell died a year after her husband James. Emily Stone died a widow in 1891 leaving the whole of her estate to her favourite niece, thus adding considerably to Emily Alicia's holdings. The value was £82,656.

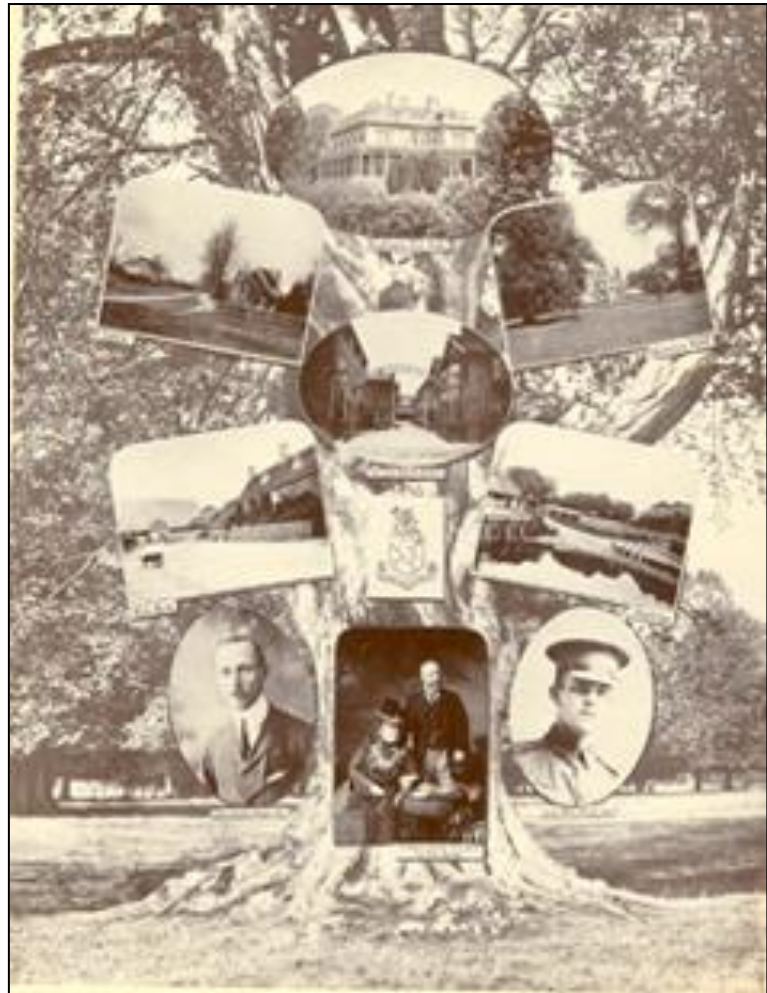
*Probate granted 13 August 1891 to Henry Collins of Reading/solicitor and Rev. Robert Baker Morrell of Orwell House, Reading/clerk [in Holy Orders], the executors and trustees.*

I bequeath to my dear niece Emily Alicia Morrell a silver soup tureen presented to the late William Stone, my emerald and pearl ring, an emerald and diamond locket containing my mother's hair and a gold watch.

I bequeath to George Herbert Morrell all my carriages, saddle harness, stable utensils, household furniture, linen, pictures, prints, china and glass, wines, liqueurs and consumable stores.

To George Herbert Morrell the sum of £9000 and the securities in which it is invested and a further £1000 after the death of Susannah Sedgeley [her servant].

*The Morrell 'family tree' with George and Emily Morrell and their two sons James and Mark with their main properties (GSLHS Collection)*



To Henry Collins and Robert Baker Morrell, their heirs, executors, administrators and assigns all my estate known as Wick Farm Headington (part freehold/part leasehold) and all messuages, farmland, tenements and hereditaments including chattels being in or adjacent in the parishes of Streatley and Goring to the uses of the trust ... for the use of George Herbert Morrell for his life and Emily Alicia Morrell for her life and for their children.

I empower George Herbert Morrell and on his death Emily Alicia Morrell to lease any part of my settled estates for a term not exceeding 5 years. I bequeath the same to my Trustees.

The investment of funds resulting from my various bequests to be in Parliamentary Stocks or Funds of Great Britain.

A separate fund for the purchase of coal for the deserving poor of Streatley, Lower Basildon and Basildon.

*Note: There was a large number of small bequests but none referred directly to George Herbert or Emily Alicia Morrell.*

*(Will dated 7 February 1883 and witnessed by John Pratt, footman at Streatley House and George Goodhall, under gardener at Streatley House.)*

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In 1906 George Herbert Morrell died leaving Emily Alicia Morrell and her two sons James Herbert and George Mark Morrell. James, as his grandfather had determined, would inherit the brewery - the history of his holdings to the present day is well documented. Mark would inherit Streatley House and properties left to his mother.

In September 1938 Emily Alicia died aged 84 and 3 months later George Mark passed away.

The resulting double death duties forced the sale of Streatley House. Headington Hill House was requisitioned by the War Department and virtually its entire contents sold.

### **Emily Alicia Morrell (1854-1938)**

*Probate granted on 14 September 1938 to John Charles Blagdon Gamlen, solicitor, Leonard Mortimer, stockbroker and Charles Cecil Henry, estate agent. The estate value: £42,500.*

I appoint Leonard Mortimer, Stockbroker of Wigmore Beare Green, Surrey, John Charles Blagdon Gamlen, Solicitor of Oxford and Charles Cecil Henry of the Estate Office, Headington Hill Hall, Estate Agent to be Executors and Trustees of my will.

*Emily Morrell on her horse outside Streatley House (GSLHS Collection)*



Indentures of Settlement made on my marriage to George Herbert Morrell (1874) between myself, my husband, Charles Mortimer Henry Collins (deceased) William Blagdon Gamlen (deceased) and Richard Randall (deceased) whereby trust funds, the proceeds of certain property sales, be held in trust for James Herbert and George Mark Morrell.

Bequests: to James Herbert Morrell portraits of my father and mother and late husband, all books at Headington Hill Hall library, furniture, linen, glass and china, pictures, prints and statuary, articles of vertu [objects of art], wines and liqueurs, all horses, saddlery, harness, stable furniture, plants and garden tools. To George Mark Morrell £2000, all furniture, linen, glass and china pictures, prints and statuary, all plate and plated goods, articles of vertu, wines and liqueurs, horses saddlery, stable furniture, plants, garden tools and implements belonging to Streatley House.

I as tenant for life of Wick Farm and other messuages, farm lands and hereditaments given to me by my aunt Emily Stone in her will dated 1883, raised on a mortgage on a portion of the said settled estates of £2000 towards payment of estate duty on my late husband's death, subsequently paid off by myself through the transfer of the said mortgage dated November 13th, 1911.

I request that my sons keep up the pensions for the pensioners on the several estates for which I am a tenant for life.

I devise the parcel of land together with buildings known as 'The Old Pound', the Limes, its outbuildings and orchard, 'Fir Copse' (part of Common Wood), part of Parsonage Wood and Wood Cottage, freehold meadow lands all situate in Streatley, 'Hogmore Island', freehold property in Streatley bought from Sir Edward Iliffe on 13 August, 1930, property bought from Ada Mawle, Harry Maule and Phillip Edwin Saunders on 27 March, 1930, and leasehold land at the top of Streatley Hill adjoining Streatley Wood with 2 cottages, gardens and premises from John Paxton Petty bought on 16 June 1928 to my son George Mark Morrell.

All residue of my real and personal estate and effects, my Trustees shall sell, call in, collect and convert into money as they think proper. Out of such revenue they are to pay my funeral and testamentary expenses and all duty levied on any legacies.

*Will dated 12th May 1933, witnessed by M.E. Collins, Rest Garth, Streatley and H Jordan, Solicitor of Reading.*

### **George Mark Morrell (1884-1939) of Newnham Croft, Wallingford**

The sudden and unexpected death of George Mark Morrell 3 months after the death of his mother resulted in a double set of death duties. This led to the sale of Streatley House and its associated estate. A more inopportune time to sell a large amount of property could not have been imagined as the auction took place in the Swan Hotel soon after the start of WW2.

*Probate granted 11 July 1939 to Royal Exchange Assurance, Norwich. Effects: £106,598.*

Colonel John Day, DSO, Colonel John Charles Wickham, DSO, Mrs Agnes Parkinson, widow of Percy Parkinson of South Stoke, Francis Harriet Caroline Morrell of Streatley House (Spinster) to be guardians of my children.

Royal Exchange Assurance to be executor and trustee of my will.

Overbury, Stewart and Eaton of 3 Upper King Street of Norwich to act in the administration of my estate.

I bequeath to my son Robin Mark Morrell various gold artefacts, my gun, and Masonic Regalia, to Francis Harriet Caroline Morrell an annual annuity of £20 or £500 in lieu.

My trustees to hold all residuary moneys and investments in trust for any or all of my children living at my death who attain 21 years (in the case of a male) and 24 years in the case of a female leaving issue.

I desire each of my children to take up some occupation by which they can earn their living quite apart from any assets I may leave at my death.

My trustees are to continue the life insurance policy which I have taken out on behalf of my son Robin Mark George Morrell until he attains the age of 21.

All monies invested under the trusts of my will may be invested in Public Stocks or Funds or Government Securities of Great Britain, India, Canada, Australia, South Africa or any Colony or Dependency of Great Britain or the purchase of freehold or leasehold properties in England but not Wales or Ireland.

I desire to be buried in the tunic and mantle of a Knight Templar together with the Cross of the Order, in the same grave as my late wife at South Stoke.

*(Will dated 30th November 1938, witnessed by J.E.S. Holland, Lieut. Royal Engineers, and Fred Smith, Civil Servant at Farnborough, Hants.)*

**Note**

The Trust arrangements set up by James Morrell were complex. There were 3 main trusts covering The Brewery, Landed Estates and The Family. In addition there are a large number of what are termed 'settlements' mainly relating to small bequests to family, friends and employees. A crucial document reinforcing the trusts – the marriage settlement of Emily Alicia Morrell and George Herbert Morrell dated 1874 – has not yet been seen.

**Michael Brodie**

***Sources***

Wills of James Morrell, Emily Alicia Morrell, George Mark Morrell and Emily Stone (National Probate Registry).

Oxford Record Office

Berkshire Record Office

Brigid Allen (1994). *Morrells of Oxford - the family and their brewery 1743-1993*. Alan Sutton.